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An Application of William Labov's Narrative Structure in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of
Maladies."

Abstract: Storytelling is one of the ways to share or convey messages. There is a term for storytelling which is Narration. The study of criticism on structure, theme, and functions is called as narratology. Through this, every narrative conveys a certain meaning to the readers. This paper focuses attention to Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "Interpreter of Maladies" in an interdisciplinary perspective of narratology and linguistics using William Labov's model. Labov, a sociolinguistic professor in the department of linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania. His model of a narrative structure has six aspects which are the instruments for the better observant of short stories. Though Labov's model is a tool to interpret the story, additionally it needs a more intensive study to bring out other features of the narrative.

Narratology deals with the structure and function of events in a text. It is quite important to see the language role in narratology. Accordingly, in this article, the researcher combined the two areas of narratology and linguistics to bring out the features of Lahiri's story "Interpreter of Maladies." The detailed study of the author's style decides the whole meaning of a text. The researcher has attempted to apply the six aspects in the 'Interpreter of Maladies' to reveal the author's excellence in storytelling.

Key Words: Narratology, Linguistics, William Labov, Structure, Storytelling.

Narratology

Language is an instrument to communicate with every people. There are so many ways to interact with other people. Storytelling is one of the ways to share or convey messages. There is a term for storytelling which is called as Narration: the study of criticism on structure, theme, and functions called as narratology. In that way, every narrative conveys a specific meaning to the readers. Though Labov's model is a tool to interpret the story, additionally it needs a more intensive study (add reference) to bring out other features of the narrative. Through Labov's model, a reader can understand the structure of a particular text. But the text cannot be exposed thoroughly. Thus the original essence of a text not only based on the construction of a specific text but also depends upon the author's background. The detailed study of the author's style decides the whole meaning of a text. The following analysis of Labov's model reveals the interrelationship between the writer, reader, language, meaning, and the structure. This analysis may be the best way to extract the complete sense of a text.

About the Author

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 in London. She brought up in Rhode Island as an American Indian writer of Bengali origin. As a famous diaspora writer, she has bagged some awards for her contributions to literature. Her famous collections are "The Namesake," "The Lowland," "Interpreter of Maladies" and "Unaccustomed Earth." Recently she wrote nonfiction "In other Words" in the Italian language which was translated by Ann Goldstein. The Time magazine honors her as "A quiet coming of age. . . . Lahiri is a master of language." She is a language lover, and she stated once in an interview that she wants to learn some languages. She shared her experience of writing in the Italian language in *In Other words*. The interest of her in languages reflects in her writing. She says "*For a writer, a foreign language is a new kind of adventure.*" Her uniqueness in the narrating story is different from others. The present research article focuses on how she is different in her narrative writing through the application of William Labov's modal of narrative structure.

The Theorist

William Labov is a sociolinguistic working as a professor in the department of linguistics, University of Pennsylvania. Labov's modal of a narrative structure has six aspects which are like an instrument to the better observant of short stories. Labov, based on his case study framed six dimensions for every narrative. These aspects bring out the overall elements of a tale into the light. The implied meaning of a text can be brought out through these aspects and even other than the meaning like language, vocabulary, tense, strategy, etc.

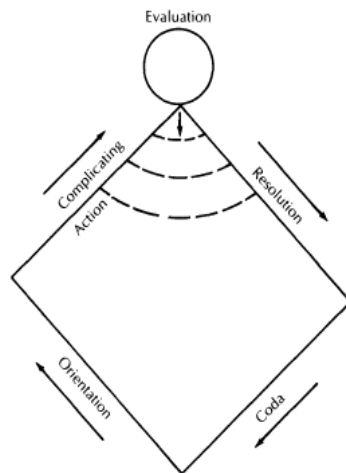
There is no survey of literature

The Six Aspects

The following are the six aspects of a narrative.

1. Abstract - It provides a piece of first-hand knowledge about the story at the beginning of a narrative. Usually, in a paragraph.
2. Orientation – In this part, the narrative deals with the time, setting, characters, theme, and motif, etc.
3. Complicating Action – This particular part may start anywhere in a narrative. But usually after the orientation part. Things which are problematic in a narrative may be discussed in this part.
4. Evaluation- This is a part deals with the further development of the complicating action in a narrative. Also, it has the events which make the problem more serious to attain the solution.
5. Resolution- All the troubles of the narrative will get solved in this part. This is a part which deals with the solution of the complicated action in a narrative.
6. Coda- It deals with the moral of a narrative. The outcome of the reader may discuss in this part.

The above six aspects are introduced by Labov in his essay entitled “The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax.” published in 1972. He in this essay says these six aspects as a tool to understand the meaning, structure, and theme of a narrative better. Every narrative is based on a particular language, culture, and place of a narrator. Though Labov’s modal framed out by experimenting with oral narratives, it can be applied in written narratives too. The following diagram shows the aspects more fruitful to the readers. Through the lens of this diagram, the story can be analyzed in detail. As the changes in language continued, it is also possible, changes in the structure in the future.



The aim of the Article

This paper bestows attention to Lahiri's short story "Interpreter of Maladies" in an interdisciplinary perspective of narratology and linguistics. The researcher attempted to apply the six aspects of this story to reveal Lahiri's excellence in storytelling. Narratology deals with the structure and function of events in a text. It is quite important to see the language role in narratology. Accordingly, in this article, the researcher combined the two areas of narratology and linguistics to bring out the features of Lahiri's story "Interpreter of Maladies."

Summary of the Story

The title story of Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" deals with a tourist guide Mr. Kapasi with an American born Indian couple. Mr. and Mrs. Das family along with their three children come to India to visit the Sun Temple at Konarak. They lodged in hotel Sandy Villa. They are very young, and their children Tina, Ronny, and Bobby are looking very close in age. They are foreigners only by their appearance.

Further introduction reveals their family back. As a guide, Mr. Kapasi introduced himself as an interpreter in a doctor's private clinic. Because of the Gujarati patients badly in need of his help to explain their health issues. Further development of the story in the Sun Temple builds a relationship between Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi. This makes him lengthen the

trip. He brings them to visit a hill where all of them want to climb up the hill except Mrs. Das. She says she cannot go since she is very much tired. She urged him to stay to pass the time. She wants to spend time with him. She starts her conversation with him about her past life. She reveals a secret of her life that Bobby is not Mr. Das's son. This makes him shocked. On hearing the secret part of her life, Mr. Kapasi erased her memories from her mind. Symbolically, the paper in which Mrs. Das noted his mailing address flying over the air when the family gets back to their country indicates the ruined relationship.

Application of Labov's Model in the Story

The following use of Labov's model will give the readers a kind of different experience in reading. Also in this article, the researcher proposed some more elements for the betterment of the analysis of a narrative. One theorist named Ferdinand de Saussure believed in the structural analysis. He suggested the analysis to bring out the implied meaning of a text. Similarly, Labov suggested the model of a narrative structure.

Abstract: The first aspect of the list is Abstract. 'An abstract is an initial clause in a narrative that reports the entire sequence of events of the narrative' (Ibid. pp. 4-5). Usually, this part comes at the beginning of a story. Sometimes the title of the story also presents like an abstract. In this story, the title plays the role of an abstract. Given the fact, the main character Mr. Kapasi plays an interpreter role to help the needy. "I am not a doctor. I work with one. As an interpreter." (50) He is working there to interpret the patients' health issues in the Bengali language. Because the doctor does not become aware of the Bengali language. The meaning of the word interpreter correlates with Mr. Kapasi exactly. Mrs. Das wants to use him as a messenger between herself and Mr. Das since she has a secret in her life. "Mr. Kapasi, don't you have anything to say? I thought that was your job." (65) She wants from him a suggestion to overcome her guilty conscious. She expected that kind of remedy for her mental sickness

about her life. Thus the title of the story is the Abstract that denotes the hint of the narrative. On reading the title readers can guess about the storyline. It gives the first-hand knowledge of the plot that it deals with someone's problems to be solved.

Orientation: This aspect reveals the information of time, place, characters, and their role in a narrative. The narrator provides the information to make readers aware of the details of the narrative. Usually, this part takes place in the beginning part of the story. Labov says that the abstract and orientation elements rarely exist in every text. But it is very much essential in a narrative. It builds up the story. It plays a supportive role in a text to understand the background of the story. In this story, the orientation part occurs in the first two paragraphs with the details of the major characters, their native, current location, time, the purpose of their presence. The narrator tells that the main characters Mr. Kapasi, a tourist guide, Mr. and Mrs. Das's family are engaged in a place to visit Konarak Sun Temple. "They were on the way to see the Sun Temple at Konarak." (43) Also, the narrator indicated the time that it is a Saturday in July. They are staying in a hotel named Sandy Villa. Mr. Kapasi first meets them in the porch of the hotel. Through the words of Mr. Kapasi, the readers come to know that the couple has three children Tina, Ronny and Bobby and they are very close in age. They seemed Indian, but they are wearing different clothes which are a sign of their interest in exposing themselves as foreigners." When Mr. Kapasi had pressed his palms together in greeting, but Mr. Das squeezed hands like an American..." (44)

Not like other stories this has detailed orientation of the resources of the story. Lahiri entirely used her excellence as a storyteller in this short story. She described the character in detail which supports the plot from a domestic point of view. As per Labov's model, the orientation part comes at the beginning of a story before the complicating action. But here the orientation part takes important place which provides plenty of knowledge about the family. Mr. Kapasi

takes extra care of the family because of Mrs. Das. As a tourist guide, he does his duty correctly. He converses with them freely and extracts more information about their family. The beautiful description of the events and places wins the readers' attention.

Complicating Action: This part of the model focuses the answer to the question 'Then what happened?' After the orientation part, things are getting complicated, and a kind of tension begin to grow in the minds of readers regarding the narrative. The principal characters are experiencing specific trauma, and due to that, the seriousness of the narrative is building up. This will make the readers observe the events very keenly. A kind of curiosity is raised there and further; it will lead the narrative to the next part. Only through problems, any narratives can come to a solution. Hence, this aspect is very important to any narrative.

Here the complicating action begins when Mr. Kapasi meets Mrs. Das. Here, the problem is not much serious. But it creates certain tension among the readers regarding the plot. Any reader can guess that here after the plot will be like this or that. This complication is just of the two characters Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das. It is thus Mrs. Das reveals a truth about her past to Mr. Kapasi. "No, of course not. And no one knows, of course. No one at all. I've kept it a secret for eight whole years." (62) The secret is that Booby is not Mr. Das's son "He's not Raj's son." (62) By revealing this secret to Mr. Kapasi, she needs a remedy for her tension. She asked Kapasi to help in this regard and ask him to suggest a solution. Apart from this complication, the story has another one that is the family of Mr. Das's. They get troubles with the monkeys when they are visiting places. This turns the plot in a different point of view.

Evaluation is a part which tells next what happened. After the complicating action, some things exist in a narrative to support the complications to be resolved. It says the reason why the story is being discussed. Similarly, in this story, Mrs. Das reveals the secret of her life to Mr. Kapasi.

There is no necessity for Mrs. Das to tell this to him. But she wants to reduce her stress by telling this to Kapasi. This is how she uses him in the story. Because he is the interpreter of maladies, so she wants a remedy for her stress. Mr. Kapasi would suggest to her, to be honest. But he felt insulted of that secret and her obligation. Finally, he asked, "Is it pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?" (66) The things are created reasons for the story. This is one point of view. The story can be seen from another point of view and there is a chance for all the elements of Labov can be interpreted in other events of the story.

Resolution is almost like a conclusion. All the complications are resolving in this part. In this story, Mrs. Das is about to tell the answer to the question "Is it pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?" (66) But stopped. She stepped out of the car and walked towards the path. Without an answer to the question the problem ends. Only Mr. Kapasi felt insulted by her action. After this event, he helped that family to rescue Bobby from a group of monkeys. He also noticed the paper of his address from Mrs. Das's bag flies away. Finally, Kapasi saved all the memories in his mind and the story ends.

Coda is a part to discuss the moral or message of the narrative. Also, it reveals the day to day relevance of the story. The story "Interpreter of Maladies" is just a collection of experiences of a tourist guide with a family. This shows the picture of common people who have a different lifestyle even wherever they are. There are no vital things in this story except the tourist guide's memorable experience.

Conclusion: Through Labovian structural analysis the reader can understand the style of the author Jhumpa Lahiri. Lahiri as a storyteller made a clear picture of the tourist guide Mr. Kapasi's experience with the family of Mr. Das. She described the events in a clear manner

which gives the reader a complete picture of the narrative. This is come to known because of the structural analysis. While the analysis is in the process, the analyzer can see the nuke and corner of the narrative. That gives the researcher a good knowledge of the writer, narrative, and theorist. Further, the story can be analyzed from other points of view and discuss some other new aspects in narratology.

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